DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 357 AC 014 201

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TITLE Factors Associated with Clothing Habits and Attitudes among Older Persons. The Findings from Extension Studies.
INSTITUTION Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge. Cooperative Extension Service.
PUB DATE Dec 71
NOTE 6p.; Summary of M.S. thesis, Louisiana State University; R and T Summary No. 36

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Age; Attitudes; Caucasians; *Clothing; Data Analysis; Educational Background; Health; *Hygiene; Income; *Interviews; Masters Theses; *Older Adults; Participant Characteristics; *Social Life

ABSTRACT

To determine some of the factors associated with clothing habits and attitudes and their relationship to social participation among persons 65 years of age and older, personal interviews were conducted with 100 white people, 65 and older. The possible association between the extent of participation and other variables such as attitudes, habits, age, sex, health, education, and income was also studied. An analysis of the data collected showed the following: (1) there was more social participation in the 65-70 years of age group (72%) than in the group 71 and older (28%); social activities participated in most were church services, visiting out of town, and visiting neighbors; there was no significant sex difference in the participation; and higher levels of education and occupational status, as well as fewer health problems were major factors in participation; (2) those with more participation expressed more concern about what others thought of their clothes and gave greater care to personal grooming and care of the home; (3) those who participated more had larger average monthly clothing expenditures; (4) those who participated more were more likely to plan their clothing purchase, but also more likely to buy on impulse; (5) families were the most important source of advice about clothing for both groups; and (6) transportation and tiring easily were the greatest problem for the less participation group, whereas finding a style they liked and getting a good fit were greater problems for those with more participation. (DB)

ED 072357

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH CLOTHING HABITS AND ATTITUDES AMONG OLDER PERSONS

by

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A summary of an M.S. thesis in Extension Education prepared under the supervision of Dr. J. H. Jones, Jr., Louisiana State University, December, 1971.

A copy of the complete thesis is on file in the main Library at Louisiana State University.

R & T Summary No. 36

AC014201

The Problem

Older persons need opportunities for social contacts, approval of others, and recognition of their personal dignity just as other age groups do. Previous research has shown that clothing can affect the actions and attitudes of the wearer and his relationship with others. This study was made in an attempt to determine some of the factors associated with clothing habits and attitudes, and their relationship to social participation among persons 65 years of age and older.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the extent of participation in social and other activities of persons 65 years of age and older.

2. To determine something of the attitudes about clothing of persons 65 years of age and older.

3. To determine some of the clothing habits and preferences of persons 65 years of age and older.

4. To determine the extent that clothing needs and preferences are being met for those 65 years of age and older.

5. To determine some of the problems related to clothing as experienced by persons 65 years of age and older.

6. Using the extent of participation as the major variable, to determine the possible association between the extent of participation and other variables such as attitudes, habits, age, sex, health, education, and income.

Methodology

A random sample of 100 white persons, aged 65 and older, was taken by personal interview, using a prepared interview schedule. Data were

analyzed, using the chi-square test for statistical significance, through the Computer Research Center at Louisiana State University.

Data

In presenting a summary of the findings from the data for this study, the reader is reminded that the dependent variable used for purposes of analysis was the extent of participation by the respondents, who were 65 years of age and older. Extent of participation was divided into two categories: (1) those with less participation, and (2) those with more participation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to determine factors relating to clothing and social participation of persons 65 years of age and older.

The following conclusions are based upon analysis of the data from this study:

1. It is generally assumed that as a person grows older his social activities will decrease. This assumption was supported by data from this study since more than twice as many (72 percent) with more participation were 65-70 years of age as were 71 years of age and older (28 percent). Those social activities engaged in the most included: attending regular church services, visiting out of town and visiting neighbors. Those participated in least were: attending athletic events; attending concerts, plays, or movies; travel; and other church activities than regular services. There were no significant differences in the participation of the sexes, with males generally as socially active as the females. Higher levels of educa-

tion and occupational status as well as fewer health problems were major factors associated with more participation. This group also had larger monthly expenditures, indicating that they were attempting to maintain the higher social status usually associated with these higher levels of education and occupation.

2. Five of the seven attitudes tested proved to be statistically significant as related to extent of participation. Those with more participation expressed more concern about what others thought of their clothes. They felt that others paid more attention to their clothes, and were more likely to be influenced by clothes in their first impressions of other people than those with less participation. More confidence in their dress was also expressed by those with more participation by feeling well dressed when going out. Acceptance of new fashion ideas, such as pants suits for women and the new doubleknit fabrics, was stronger among those who were more socially active. Over three-fourths of both groups showed favorable opinions toward bright colors in men's clothing. Greater care was given to personal grooming and keeping the home tidy among those who participated more, indicating that they were more prepared for social involvement.

3. Older persons need fewer clothes than when they were younger, as supported by the data that showed three-fourths of both participation groups needing less clothes. Those who participate more have larger average monthly clothing expenditures, and buy more dress-up clothes. Those who participate more were likely to buy all their own clothes and to show at specialty and department stores. The less socially active also shopped at department stores but preferred chain stores over

specialty shops. The reason given most often by both groups for selecting a particular store was the wide selection of clothing.

4. Significant differences between those who participated more in social activities and those who participated less were found in their buying habits. The data showed that those who participated more were more likely to plan their clothing purchases, but they indicated that this same group was more likely to buy on impulse, too. Impulse buying, buying more expensive garments, as well as buying more garments could account for the larger average monthly clothing expenditures of the more socially active. Those who participated less were more likely to prefer to have someone along with them when they shopped for clothes, while those with more participation preferred to shop alone. A larger percentage of both groups preferred to look through racks of clothes themselves, but those with more participation were more likely to prefer to have the salesperson select garments for them to choose from than their less social counterparts. Both groups preferred to try garments on at the store, but more of those who were more socially active liked to take them home on approval than the less active did. Comfort and fit were the two most important qualities looked for in dress-up clothes, with good workmanship, being becoming, and easy-to-put-on also important. Of least importance were brand name, low price, and up-to-date style.

5. Those who participated more were likely to use observing others, newspaper ads and TV ads for information about clothing. They were likely to use radio ads, mail-order catalogs and friends and neighbors less. Those with less participation depended more upon

observing others, newspapers and window shopping for information and depended least upon radio ads, magazine ads and friends and neighbors. Families were the most important source of advice about clothing for both groups, with those with less participation depending more upon the family than did the more socially active. Those who participated more depended more upon salespersons for advice about clothing than did those with less participation.

6. Problems related to clothing also proved to be statistically significant in the differences between those who participated more and those who participated less. Although transportation to go shopping for clothing and tiring easily while shopping were the greatest problems for those with less participation, finding a style they liked and getting a good fit were greater problems for those with more participation. Approximately half of both groups had problems in finding clothes made of the fabrics they liked. Although other studies have shown that older people sometimes have problems caring for their own clothes, this was not substantiated by this study, with 100 percent saying they had no problems of this type.

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